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SENSITIVE
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USDA FAS FOR OCRA/KUYPERS; OSTA/HAMILTON, BEAN;
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PASS FSIS DUTROW, HARRIES
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STATE FOR EUR/RUS
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BRUSSELS PASS APHIS/FERNANDEZ
VIENNA PASS APHIS/TANAKA

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TAGS: [EAGR](#) [ETRD](#) [ECON](#) [WTO](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: RUSSIAN VET SERVICE DELISTS 9 MORE U.S.
PORK FACILITIES

REF: A) HANSEN/DUTROW EMAIL 1/28/09, B) 08 MOSCOW
2608, C) 08 MOSCOW 2435

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Russian Federal Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance Service (VPSS) advised via official letter that 9 additional U.S. pork facilities will be delisted as of February 10 ostensibly due to clerical errors found on documentation that accompanied meat shipments to Russia. This marks the first time that VPSS has delisted U.S. meat facilities for clerical errors on accompanying veterinary certificates even though the product were found to be safe and wholesome. The original scanned copy of the letter and courtesy translation were sent to FAS/FSIS on January 28, 2009 (REF A). An informal embassy translation of the letter follows. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) BEGIN TEXT:
Moscow, January 27, 2009
No. FS-NV-2/444

Assistant Administrator
Office of International Affairs
USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)
Dr. Ronald K. Jones

The Federal Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance Service (VPSS) extends its regards to the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service and informs you of the following:

VPSS officials in Kamchatskiy kray discovered the following gross violations in shipments of meat product from the United States to the address of "Logisticheskaya Sluzhba" (Kamchatskiy kray):

On October 25, 2008, 24,957 kg of pork jowls arrived at the port from establishment 320M in container PONU 4865522 with U.S. veterinary certificate RFP-121349 dated August 06, 2008. During routine inspection, official veterinarians found 585 kg of pork hearts from establishment

320M without complete veterinary documentation.

On October 31 of 2008, a shipment of pork by-products from establishment 18079 in container PONU 4952925 with U.S. veterinary certificate RFP-125686 dated August 08, 2008, was detained. During routine veterinary inspection, official veterinarians found products with manufacturing dates on boxes that did not match the dates indicated on the accompanying veterinary certificate.

On December 1, 2008, 24,495 kg of pork from the establishments 85B and 850 were detained. The product was shipped in container MWCU 6292570 with U.S. veterinary certificate RFP-086017 dated July 18, 2008, and issued by cold storage 27398. During routine veterinary inspection, several boxes of pork were found to have an additional label in Russian stating, "Manufacturer: Tyson Fresh Meats Establishment 244L". This establishment was never indicated in the accompanying veterinary certificate. Veterinarians also found missing labels on the internal packages of meat blocks; some blocks in cartons did not have internal packages at all.

On December 11, 2008, 29,814 kg of pork were detained. The product was manufactured at establishment 717 and passed through cold storage 3898 and 21059 with U.S. veterinary certificate RFP-089745 dated September 10, 2008. During routine veterinary inspection, official

veterinarians found that the above-mentioned veterinary certificate was issued for only 13,410 kg. This means that the additional 16,404 kg of pork were shipped with no accompanying veterinary documents.

On December 12, 2008, 22,473 kg of pork were detained. The product originated from establishment 413 and pass through cold storage 18435 and 18079 with U.S. veterinary certificate RFP-089745 dated September 10, 2008. During routine veterinary inspection, official veterinarians discovered that veterinary certificate RFP-125692 was indicated on the package of the product but did not correspond to the number on the accompanying veterinary certificate. China was indicated on the labels as country of destination.

On November 16, 208, VPSS officials in Magadan oblast discovered violations in a shipment of 12,085.42 kg of prepared meat products from the United States in container TRLU 2011417 to the address of "Nord Star Catering" (Magadan oblast). The shipment was accompanied with veterinary certificates RFP-091959 of September 19, 2008, and RFP 199327 of September 11, 2008. During routine veterinary inspection, official veterinarians found that veterinary certificate RFP-091959 (issued for frozen pork and pork by-products exported to the Russian Federation for processing or retail trade) was actually issued for smoked bacon that was produced at the establishment 717 and shipped from the cold storage 31552. The vessel "Amderma" was indicated in under "Transport" but the shipment actually arrived on the vessel 'Beluga Foresight'. Weight units, packaging, processing establishment number, name or number of transport were not indicated in the accompanying veterinary certificate RFP 199327 dated September 11, 2008, that was issued for prepared meat products manufactured at establishment 9201.

On October 2, 2008, VPSS officials from Tver oblast and Pskov oblast revealed gross violations in a shipment of 23,732 kg of pork from the United States to "Velikolukskiy Myasokombinat" (Pskov oblast). The product originated from establishment 31965 and was shipped from cold storage 18674 in container OOLU 6034495 with veterinary certificate RFP-096406 dated August 25, 2008. During routine veterinary inspection, official veterinarians discovered discrepancies in the manufacturing date of the products indicated in the labels (June 2008) with the manufacturing date listed in the accompanying veterinary certificate (April 2008).

VPSS has repeatedly informed FSIS of the frequent occurrences of these gross violations and asked that necessary measures be taken for improving control of the Qrk of U.S. veterinary specialists and the companies approved for export of meat products to Russia. To date, the U.S. veterinary services have not taken effective measures to enforce the control on the products exported to Russia and to prevent frequent violations.

As a result, VPSS is forced to impose temporary restrictions on veterinary produQs to the Russian Federation from the following U.S. establishments 320M, 18079, 85B, 850, 27398, 3898, 18435, 18079, 31552, 9201, and 18674 as of February 10, 2009. COMMENT: Establishment 9201 is not on the list of approved U.S. pork exporters to Russia and 18079 was listed twice. This appears to be a clerical mistake on behalf

of VPSS. END COMMENT.

The temporary restrictions may be lifted only after joint audits of the mentioned establishments have been undertaken.

Dr. Jones, let me assure you of my highest esteem.

Deputy Head
N.A. Vlasov
END TEXT.

¶3. (SBU) For almost 2 years now VPSS has complained about what they consider to be a large number of clerical errors being discovered on U.S. veterinary certificates accompanying meat and poultry shipments to Russia. Periodically, VPSS summarizes all of the typos found on veterinary certificates and, as in this instance, sends the list to FSIS via official letters threatening to ban either the facilities in question and/or the entire U.S. meat and poultry industry unless measures are taken to stop the number of "gross violations of Russian veterinary rules and regulations". An example of a minor clerical error is a missing number of the meat processing facility listed on a certificate. Post has reminded VPSS officials on numerous occasions that minor typos on veterinary certificates have nothing to do with food safety or quality of the product in question and should not solely restrict the product from clearing through customs.

¶4. (U) The United States exported approximately 1 million metric tons of meat and poultry to Russia valued at an USD 640 million dollars in calendar year 2007. The quantity of meat that arrived with accompany veterinary certificates that had clerical errors totaled 2,515 metric tons or just 0.25 percent of total U.S. meat shipments

to Russia (REF B). During the first 9 months of 2008, the United States exported over 36,000 containers of meat and poultry to Russia. During the same period, VPSS has informed Post of 44 findings of errors on accompanying veterinary certificates. This shows that on 0.12 percent of all U.S. shipments during this time period arrived with typos on veterinary certificates. While most would consider this to be an acceptable margin of error that comes with large trade volumes, VPSS believes otherwise and now enforces a strict zero tolerance policy towards human error and will now use this justification to delist U.S. meat/poultry facilities in an effort to manage trade.

15. (SBU) Most countries around the world accept that occasional human error occurs when paperwork is filled out for meat and poultry shipments. It is a common international practice for countries to accept replacement certificates or correction letters from a trading partner's veterinary service when minor typographical errors are discovered on veterinary documentation at which point the product is quickly cleared. Breaking away from standard international practice, VPSS refuses to accept replacement certificates or correction letters from the United States. In addition, VPSS now demands that FSIS make arrangements to have all shipments sent back to the United States when typos are found on veterinary certificates. As a result, many Russian importers have been forced to provide large (under the table) payments to customs and VPSS port officials to get the product released to avoid paying demurrage. Before 2007, FSIS correction letters were accepted by VPSS without

any problems (REF C).

16. (SBU) A high level VPSS official in Vladivostok informed Post recently that typos on veterinary documents accompanying shipments from the United States are not really a problem for them and that such occurrences are rare compared to the volume arriving at their port. He added that when typos do occur they are usually very minor in nature such as a missing number of the U.S. establishment. Interestingly, the official complained that his staff in Vladivostok is exhausted in dealing with the very high number of problems being discovered with imported Brazilian meat and poultry. He added that a large percentage of Brazilian shipments arrive with no veterinary certificates at all and/or with many other major discrepancies on documentation. Yet the same tough zero tolerance policy on clerical errors is not being enforced on Brazilian products (or from any other major trading partner). This leads Post to believe that VPSS port authorities have been instructed to specifically target American shipments in an effort to reduce growing U.S. meat and poultry exports to Russia.

17. (SBU) This is the first time that VPSS has delisted U.S. meat facilities due to clerical errors on accompanying documentation. Several of 9 facilities banned include major exporting companies such as Smithfield, Farmland and Cargill. It is reasonable to expect more U.S. facilities will be delisted in the future under similar justification unless VPSS is forced to back away from this new policy shift. Post encourages Washington addressees to seek higher-level intervention and to respond immediately to this letter.

¶8. (SBU) COMMENT: It is unacceptable that U.S. meat and poultry facilities that produce and export safe and wholesome products are being delisted because of clerical errors discovered on accompanying certificates. This new policy appears to be nothing more than a non-tariff barrier aimed at protecting domestic producers at the expense of U.S. exporters. This type of behavior is totally unacceptable from a country that is at the end game of WTO accession. END COMMENT.

BEYRLE